

**MINUTES OF THE LOCAL MEETING OF THE  
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
May 24, 2006**

The local jurisdiction meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Wednesday, May 24, 2006, at the Courtyard Marriott at Columbia Point, 480 Columbia Point Drive, Richland WA.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Dan O'Neal, Ed Barnes, Bob Distler, Dick Ford, Elmira Forner, Carol Moser and Dale Stedman.

**CHAIRMAN INTRODUCTIONS AND OVERVIEW OF THE COMMISSION'S RE-DEFINED FUNCTIONS**

Chair O'Neal opened the meeting with welcome introductions and an overview of the Commission's roles and responsibilities. He thanked Mark Kushner, Transportation Director, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments, for his assistance in planning today's meeting.

**DISCUSSION OF LOCAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES**

State Representative Larry Haler welcomed the Commission. He noted that the Tri-Cities area is growing rapidly as a result of community involvement. He emphasized that the PNNL is a national resource that is an asset to the area as well as the state of Washington. They are partnering with WSU on bio-diesel research and development and hope to grow the alternative fuels industry locally.

Mayor Robert Welch, City of Richland, commented on various projects in the area that need to be addressed. He also expressed his concerns regarding funding for local projects and partnership issues with the Department of Transportation.

Mayor James Beaver, City of Kennewick, expressed that the Commission's visit gives encouragement. He shared that communities are growing and transportation facilities need improvements now in order to meet future growth. He also emphasized that the area as well as the state must remain competitive.

Mayor Joyce Olson, City of Pasco, pointed out that the City of Pasco is a transportation center with highways, a regional rail center, airport, river-barge terminal and gas pipelines. She noted that entities must work together as partners for a comprehensive transportation plan to be successful. She emphasized the importance of partnerships in the plan as opposed to specific project partnerships.

Mayor Pro Tem Nancy Aldrich, City of West Richland, expressed that the future of the city depends on the current infrastructure to support the future. With funding not being as plentiful as it was in the past the city has tried to build the infrastructure to meet the need.

Mayor Ed Ammon, City of College Place, emphasized that there is no money for transportation projects. Small cities must be kept in mind for funding.

As a result of Initiative 695 the city has lost approximately \$900,000 dollars in the budget. He encouraged the Commission to support groups such as the TIB.

Mayor Bryan Robinson, City of Benton City, shared that the city has very few transportation issues thanks to state, regional and community support. He noted that there are a couple of local transportation issues that need to be addressed.

### **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S REGIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Don Whitehouse, Regional Administrator, South Central Region, WSDOT, provided an overview of completed and in progress projects in the region. He noted that the Tri-Cities has done an excellent job with their system. He commented on the tremendous growth in the area and resulting issues. He briefly touched on Snoqualmie Pass I-90, the economics and trade issues involved, and the upcoming release of a preferred alternative design.

### **DISCUSSION OF REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES**

Julie Jones, President, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments, explained the COG's composition, function and funding.

Leo Bowman, Chair, PAC, thanked the Commission for coming to the Tri-Cities. He explained that RTPO's have an aggressive outlook into the future. He complimented the Commission's involvement in rail issues and looking at sustainable revenue sources. He emphasized that Washington State is addressing the symptoms of rail capacity and not the problem itself. He urged review of rail obligations in the state and support for federal legislation facilitating rail open access. He was also very pointed out that the railroad does not pay any taxes that he is aware of.

Robert Alberts, City of Pasco, noted that local agencies and state agencies must work as partners for a comprehensive transportation plan to be successful. Informal partnerships are as important as formal partnerships.

Russell Burtner, City of Kennewick, provided an overview of the Steptoe – Gage extension plan.

Pete Rogalsky, City of Richland, provided an overview of the SR 240/I – 182 Duportail Bridge Project. He emphasized that most city councils are strongly focused on economic development. He thanked the Commission for its support of partnerships.

Ms. Jones distributed a handout regarding the West Richland Red Mountain Project. She specifically referred to the Red Mountain Center Project consisting of multifamily residential, commercial and light industrial land, noting that the projects are ready to go.

Mr. Bowman also commented on the vision for the Red Mountain Project explaining specifics of the development and the involved cultural resources.

Nicola Metzgar, City of College Place, explained the necessity for the Myra Road extension project. She noted that funding partners for the project are in place.

Tim Arntzen, Executive Director, Port of Kennewick and President of Tri Ports explained that Tri Ports consists of the Ports of Benton, Kennewick and Pasco. He shared information regarding port regional transportation issues that included but are not specific to the Ports.

Tim Fredrickson, Ben Franklin Transit, shared that the transit system has restored its funding loss as a result of Initiative 695 through a local sales tax. There are several transit modes within the transit district that show an increase in ridership over the last year due to community involvement.

Bob Spink, City Engineer, City of Benton City, distributed a proposed design for an interchange at I 82 and SR 225. He indicated that the community has been supportive of the proposed improvements.

Mayor Bryan Robinson, City of Benton City, commented regarding the Red Mountain Project.

### **TOURISM AND TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS**

Kris Kelley-Watkins, Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau, provided an overview regarding the advantages of tourism in the region. There are many benefits to tourism such as the generation of revenue, jobs and quality of life improvements to (walking and bicycle paths) the infrastructure.

### **PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD**

Paul W. Locke, citizen, shared his concerns regarding prioritizing and reducing the cost of transportation projects.

Art Tackett, resident, City of Connell, shared his concerns regarding the impact on the transportation infrastructure resulting from a local public works project.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m., on May 24, 2006.

**WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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DANIEL O'NEAL, Chair

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DICK FORD, Vice-Chair

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EDWARD BARNES, Member

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DALE STEDMAN, Member

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ELMIRA FORNER, Member

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CAROL MOSER, Member

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ROBERT S. DISTLER, Member

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DOUGLAS MACDONALD, Ex-Officio Member  
Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

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REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

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DATE OF APPROVAL